

Assembly Concurrent Resolution

No. 36

Introduced by Assembly Member Cox

March 13, 2001

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 36—Relative to Meningitis Awareness Month.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 36, as introduced, Cox. Meningococcal disease awareness.

This measure would designate March 2001 as Meningitis Awareness Month.

Fiscal committee: no.

1 WHEREAS, Meningococcal disease, caused by the bacteria
2 *Neisseria meningococcus*, is one of the most deadly and least
3 understood infections in the United States; and

4 WHEREAS, This disease can affect otherwise healthy people
5 without warning, and causes serious illness and often death; and

6 WHEREAS, The two most common types of meningococcal
7 disease are: (1) meningitis, an infection of the fluid that surrounds
8 the spinal cord and the brain, causing high fever, confusion,
9 sleepiness, nausea, and vomiting, and (2) meningococemia, an
10 infection of the blood stream that causes a rash or spots; and

11 WHEREAS, Both of these diseases can be fatal within hours
12 after the first symptoms appear; and

13 WHEREAS, Individuals who survive meningococcal infection
14 can suffer from debilitating effects, such as hearing and vision loss,
15 learning difficulties or mental retardation, loss of limbs, and
16 paralysis; and

1 WHEREAS, The bacteria can be passed by direct and close
2 contact with someone who is infected or is carrying the bacteria;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, Approximately 20 to 25 percent of the general
5 population carries the bacteria in the back of their noses and throats
6 without developing the disease, but may pass the bacteria to others;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, The bacteria causing meningococcal disease can
9 be spread through the exchange of respiratory and throat secretions
10 that result from coughing, kissing, and sharing items such as
11 cigarettes, lipstick, food and drinks, toothbrushes, and mouth
12 guards; and

13 WHEREAS, The bacteria causing meningococcal disease
14 cannot be spread by being in the same room or by simply breathing
15 the air where a person with the infection has been; and

16 WHEREAS, The disease usually develops within one to 10 days
17 after exposure; and

18 WHEREAS, Meningococcal disease can be treated with a
19 number of effective antibiotics, but it is important that treatment
20 be started as early as possible in the course of the disease because
21 the onset of symptoms is extremely rapid; and

22 WHEREAS, While in the past, the attack rate of meningococcal
23 disease was highest among children six to 36 months of age, the
24 risk now appears to be shifting toward older children and
25 adolescents, with a number of outbreaks in schools, universities,
26 and other organization-based settings; and

27 WHEREAS, People in the Sacramento region are experiencing
28 an increase in the level of concern regarding meningococcal
29 disease, with over 25 cases of the disease within the last year in
30 Sacramento, El Dorado, and Placer Counties, with five of those
31 resulting in death; and

32 WHEREAS, While a vaccination is available for four of the five
33 common strains of the disease, the Centers for Disease Control and
34 Prevention has recommended only that military recruits and
35 college freshman living in dormitories and residence halls receive
36 the vaccination; and

37 WHEREAS, The majority of meningitis deaths in the
38 Sacramento region have been high school students; now,
39 therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate*
2 *thereof concurring*, That the medical community is requested to
3 inform, as a routine practice, adolescent patients and their parents
4 about the vaccination options against meningococcal disease; and
5 be it further

6 *Resolved*, That the Legislature hereby designates March 2001
7 as Meningitis Awareness Month in this state in order to increase
8 public awareness of this disease and the availability of successful
9 vaccines.

